



# IN TOUCH

## *Talking to Your Children About War, Terrorism and Other Scary Things*

We have had many calls from concerned parents seeking advice on how to talk to their children about war and terrorism since the U.S. attack on Iraq. Parents want to know how to deal with their children's anxieties. There are many different political opinions regarding the most recent outbreak of violence. What we can agree on is that we don't want our children to be harmed by fear. How I wish there was an easy answer, a sure-fire way to allay their fears. Children, like the rest of us, have different temperaments, and while some will take this more or less in stride, others may feel a good deal of anxiety. It is completely normal to be upset about hard, scary and tragic events. Here are some thoughts and ideas that may help you respond:

- ***Pay attention to how much you have the TV news on while your young child is in the room.*** If he or she is scared or anxious, constant exposure to frightening images is certainly not helpful. It is often difficult or impossible for children to distinguish between "fake" violence they see in movies or TV shows and the very real violence of this event. Ask your children what they are seeing,

thinking and understanding from the news. They may need help clarifying and understanding.

- ***Work with your own emotions.*** It is okay for your children to see your feelings, and to understand that deep feelings in such situations are normal, even healthy, to feel. Help your child understand feelings by naming them, such as "I'm so sad to see people being hurt...I'm worried that..." At the same time it is important that we not add to children's fears by creating fear that we, the adults, cannot cope.
- ***Maintain emotional balance; maintain normal routines.*** There's bound to be a lot of fear and anxiety around. Anxiety is "contagious" - particularly for young children. It will be helpful for your child to see that your world, and theirs, is not in chaos. To the extent that it's possible, try to maintain your daily family routines.
- ***Avoid shaming your children for being upset or afraid.*** Sometimes it may be tempting to tell kids to "buck up" and not be a "sissy" when they express fear. We sometimes do this out of the best of intentions to help children cope better. But in fact this approach only adds insult to what is already a difficult emotional reality for your child. Instead, encourage your child to communicate with you about what he or she is feeling.

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*Helping people lead healthier lives*

- ***Talk to your children in language they can understand.*** “Why are there bad people?” We obviously don’t have all the answers on that one, but we do know something about the sort of people who commit acts of terrorism. They tend to be people who believe so strongly in something that they are willing to kill innocent people and to die for the sake of those beliefs. This can be true of people of any nationality or religious group. Depending on the age and maturity of your child, you can start to talk about the difference between aggression and self-defense. There is a wide spectrum of belief on this—some people believe that it is right and good to fight force with force, while others believe that any violence only begets more violence. Current events encourage all of us to look deeply at our own beliefs about this.

*“The Force versus The Dark Side”* If your child is old enough to be familiar with the mythology of Star Wars, this can be useful language. Anyone who knows of Darth Vader and Yoda already has some understanding of the struggle between good and evil.

*“Who are the Bad People?”* Another hard question. It is very easy in scary times to point the finger and look for a scapegoat. Events like this can be very divisive in a diverse nation like ours. We believe it is important to avoid blaming any specific ethnic or religious group as a whole. Fanaticism can infect any ethnic, racial or religious group.

- ***Express your love.*** A time of war and violence is a good time to remember the power and importance of love. Your child needs to feel safe and protected by you. Reassure your child that the danger to your family is minimal and that you are there to protect your child.
- ***Take the time to really listen to your children.*** If your children are showing signs of distress which you think are connected to current events, ask your children how they are feeling. Without suggesting words that may not be their own, try to find out what’s going on for them. Are they scared? What worries them the most? And then, as much as possible, reassure your child about your family’s safety.
- ***Spend special time with your children.*** Your presence alone can be comforting. If there are special things you do together, make a special effort to do them. If your family has found strength in worshiping or meditating together, this would be a good time to strengthen your practice.

*by Nancy Seldin, MPH, EdD  
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## *EAPs and Domestic Abuse*

Few problems are more secretive among victims than domestic violence and abuse at the hands of intimate partners. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, more than 2.8 million people are victimized by their intimate partners each year. Seventy-five percent of victims are targeted at work with harassing calls, an abusive spouse showing up at work or other stalking behavior. Are you living as a silent victim in an abusive relationship? Please contact your EAP for support and helpful, confidential guidance.

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hard, scary and tragic events.*

## *Don't Dismiss Violence Warnings*

Never dismiss threats made by coworkers or consider them “simply the employee getting something off his chest.” Report it to your manager or otherwise follow your organization’s policy on reporting threats of violence. Researchers mostly agree on a profile of an employee prone to lethal violence. He is typically a male age 25 to 40 who feels the workplace has been unjust to him. Other characteristics: he has frequent disputes with management; may cause fear among coworkers; has made threats against coworkers, supervisors, or the organization; has a fascination with the military or paramilitary; is a multiple gun owner/weapon collector; is sympathetic to media reports of violence in the workplace; may have an unstable family life; has a history of past family/marital troubles; and, has poor anger control.

## *Finding the Trigger Point*

Sixty years of medical evidence, particularly among pain clinic medical doctors, has found that many common aches and pains and puzzling physical complaints are actually caused by “trigger points” – small contraction knots in the muscles of the body sometimes caused by injury. A new book, *The Trigger Point Therapy Workbook: Your Self-Treatment Guide for Pain Relief*, (2002 Harbinger Publications) helps you find these trigger points and apply self-care massage techniques. Most trigger points generate referred pain, a pain sent to other parts of the body, usually nearby. Direct treatment won’t produce a lasting effect at these spots. The workbook helps you zero in on the right target. (Don’t confuse trigger points with acupressure or acupuncture.) Do you have a pain that has been nagging you for years? Talk to your doctor and see if this new book points you in the right direction of pain relief.

## *Stress-busting Habits*

If going to the gym doesn’t quite manage your stress, think about practicing more stress management on the go. Consider these stress-busting habits:

### **Make Decision Earlier.**

Think about some of the problems you face. Do you hold the view that your current circumstances are mostly the result of choices you have made? Would circumstances be different now if you had made different decisions in the past? Another part of this strategy is asking yourself what decisions you face right now that you are putting off. How much control will you have over these decisions if you continue to wait? The answer to this question should prompt you to make more effective decisions by making them sooner.

### **Slow Down, Strategically Detach.**

Slowing down is easier said than done, but here are some good techniques: **1)** Schedule private time for yourself on a regular basis, before or after work. **2)** Block off time to work on projects. **3)** Make personal appointments after work, but soon after the end of your workday. This can help you work more efficiently, avoid distractions and leave on time. None of these techniques is foolproof, but they work if practiced enough.

### **Practice the Art of Saying “No.”**

Personal energy is a resource. How much of this resource can you afford for all that you have to do? The inability to give up something or say “no” can be an enormous personal burden. Sometimes consequences for saying “no” are not what we imagine. When under stress, ask yourself, “Is there something I can give up or harmlessly say no to without harming myself or others?”

## *Using Your EAP*

**Question:** Can the EAP help me with parenting difficulties I am experiencing with my teenager?

**Answer:** Yes. The EAP can discuss parenting issues with you. The EAP will work directly with you, and, in the majority of cases, most issues can be resolved within the EAP. Drug and alcohol problems, parental conflicts, legal troubles, relationship problems and depression are common for many teens. The EAP has experience with all of them. If needed, the EAP will guide you in finding additional resources in your community.

**Question:** I gave consent to the EAP to inform my supervisor that I participated in the EAP. If the next-level manager (his supervisor) phones to ask if I called the EAP, will the EAP disclose my participation?

**Answer:** No. The employee assistance professional will not disclose your participation in the EAP to the next-level supervisor unless you provide his or her name in writing on a form for the release of confidential information.

**Question:** My son is attending an out-of-state college and is struggling with being away from home for the first time. He is eligible for EAP services but is this the best option for him?

**Answer:** Many students struggle when they first go off to college. It is a common phenomenon and one that usually resolves itself within a short time. Your son has several options. He may talk with an EAP professional anytime by calling the telephone number listed below. Encourage your son to talk with his dorm's resident assistant whose job it is to help new students transition to college life. Most colleges also have a counseling center which is free or low cost and used to dealing with this issue.

To speak with an EAP Professional,  
please call:

**800.765.0770**